



Speech By **Sean Dillon**

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 18 November 2025

HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Mr DILLON** (Gregory—LNP) (12.30 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise today to add a small contribution to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2025. I do not intend to repeat all of the technical elements that have been so well articulated, especially by my good friend the member for Townsville in his very succinct summary of a lot of the specific clauses within the bill. I do think it is important to give words to the need for this reform.

This Heavy Vehicle National Law reform has been long overdue. I commend the minister who has had the courage to grab the national system and say, 'We have to actually start to enact this reform.' Organisations such as the QTA, the Queensland livestock transport association and many others have been pleading for real reform in national heavy vehicle law for a number of years now. Whilst in some cases they would attest that this may not go as far as they would like to see it go, it is an important first step that they see a government pick this up and enact.

To the minister and his team I say thank you very much on behalf of the transport sector and also road users everywhere for introducing this. I also say thank you to the committee, very ably led by the member for Lockyer but also supported by the members for Mulgrave and Cook. I know the member for Cook has an avid interest in heavy vehicle law reform given the vast distances that heavy vehicles have to travel in his electorate but also the specific guidelines and permits around access due to the often inclement weather that is received in Far North Queensland. No doubt this is a bill that came before the committee that the member for Cook was extremely interested in. I thank them very much for their due diligence and perusal of this bill.

This is not about lowering safety. This bill actually strengthens the safety provisions for all road users especially heavy vehicle—truck—drivers. Through 20 or 21 specific clauses it is also pragmatic about infringements that were not linked to road safety, as the member for Townsville outlined very clearly earlier.

What we see right across Gregory—heavy vehicle operators such as Emerald Carrying Company; Curley Cattle Transport based in Cloncurry but with outlets and depots in Winton, Longreach and Blackall; Alpha Freight Lines, a very small but successful family owned business based in my home town of Alpha; and Gerard Johnson Transport in Tambo—is trucks sitting idle. There is a massive skill shortage and a massive problem with driver availability right throughout the heavy vehicle industry but it is especially prevalent in the livestock transport sector. Those combined outlets that I just mentioned have the capacity to cart more than 60,000 head of cattle—standard cattle units—every two days in the state of Queensland but that is not being realised because of the lack of drivers. There are trucks and trailers standing dormant and part of the reason is around the application of elements of the law that we are seeing reviewed. Should this bill pass the House today, it will mean less financial impost on drivers for simple mistakes that do not lower road safety outcomes. I do not think there should be any misreporting of this bill that it lowers road safety.

I do remember the comments of the member for Traeger during the last sitting week when we first commenced debate on this bill. He urged the minister to keep a close eye on NHVR. It has a job to do to enforce this law, to keep users of the roads safe but also to ensure a profitable and productive transport sector. These specific provisions are the commencement of that exact outcome that will allow a more pragmatic interpretation and application of punitive measures that are not linked directly to road safety. In terms of the critical capacity and skills shortage that we see in drivers and in all of the transport industry—but, as I say, especially the livestock industry in Gregory—hopefully this is but a start in paring back the deficiency that appears in that space and will directly be linked to this.

I will draw out a number of the specific policy objectives that I think are the most pertinent in this place, and I have already mentioned the amended penalty amounts, ministerial direction and approval powers that support changes to accreditation and code of practice frameworks and provide an appropriate balance of regulatory discretion and ministerial oversight. I accept that will come with pretty defined parameters. It will not allow transport ministers to make things up on the run, which is important. However, it does allow for flexibility around codes of practice and matters that do not need to come back for formal legislative review to see enhancement of heavy vehicle law application right across the state. I think that is an important provision that may actually play out in further reviews of heavy vehicle law to allow flexibility.

Of course, the principle here was the harmonisation of heavy vehicle law across the nation, and by and large we saw that. We have seen matters that are not fit for purpose for the tyranny of distance or the poor road standards in certain states. We have heard members on both sides talk about the importance of access to the Port of Brisbane. We also see this with access to feedlots and meatworks at places like Rockhampton—and the member for Rockhampton will be joining me for a tour of the JBS facilities next week alongside the members for Mirani and Keppel. It is important to understand the connectivity issues for vehicles into these places. These are critically important reforms that are just the first step.

I will make one further comment. The media reporting around the federal government's misguided regulatory impact review of the speed limit on unsigned rural roads plays directly to this piece of legislation. If we were to see this ridiculous concept supported where we would lower the speed limit on unsigned roads to 80 or less, we would play further into the problems around time to deliver product, and it does not need to be cattle. I am probably guilty of rabbiting on about livestock transport a bit too much. It can be hay, fodder in a drought, M8U or all sorts of things that people critically need in rural areas. We do not need to see an arbitrary lowering of the speed limit, which would place even more pressure on truck drivers who are trying to comply with very specific elements of heavy vehicle law not only for their own safety but for the safety of all road users and, indeed, the nature of their cargo.

I said my comments were going to be brief so I had better wrap up shortly. Once again, I say that the work that this transport minister has done in not only reviewing this legislation but also introducing programs to upgrade roads specifically to benefit the heavy vehicle sector, the maintenance guarantees that we will see uplift in places like the Bruce Highway but also Country Roads Connect plays to this. Yes, this is prescriptive—around 70-odd clauses of heavy vehicle law—but by improving the infrastructure on which our heavy vehicles need to transport daily, we may achieve this through a number of means. I say thank you to the minister and all of those people who have worked on this review. It is with pleasure that I support this on behalf of Gregory as a very good, positive and necessary first step.